

What is Claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method of matching an offer for a product with a quote, comprising:

receiving the offer from a customer machine;

obtaining at least one quote for the product from a first preferred provider in a group of preferred providers;

evaluating the at least one quote from the first preferred provider to determine if the at least one quote satisfies the offer;

if the at least one quote from the first preferred provider does not satisfy offer, repeating the obtaining of the quote and the evaluating of the quote for each preferred provider in the group of preferred providers until the offer is satisfied or until the group of preferred providers is exhausted;

if the group of preferred providers is exhausted without satisfying the offer, attempting to satisfy the offer from a group of non-preferred providers; and

if the offer is satisfied from either the group of preferred providers or the group of non-preferred providers, negotiating the purchase of the product from the provider associated with the satisfying quote.

2. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein attempting to satisfy the offer from the group of non-preferred providers comprises:

obtaining at least one quote from one or more non-preferred providers in the group of non-preferred providers;

evaluating the at least one quote obtained from each non-preferred provider to determine a most competitive non-preferred
5 quote; and

if the most competitive non-preferred quote can satisfy the offer, selecting the most competitive non-preferred quote as the satisfying quote.

3. The computer-implemented method of claim 2, wherein the most competitive non-preferred quote includes the lowest quote provided by a non-preferred provider.

4. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the product is a travel service.

5. The computer-implemented method of claim 4, wherein the travel service includes airfare.

6. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein evaluating the at least one quote from the preferred providers comprises evaluating the quotes provided by the preferred providers in descending order of value, from the highest quote to the lowest quote, and selecting the highest quote that satisfies
25 the offer.

7. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein negotiating the purchase of the product from the supplier includes making a reservation for a travel service provided by the provider at a value corresponding to the satisfying quote.

8. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein each quote is obtained from each preferred provider and non-preferred provider indirectly through a global distribution system that stores fare information associated with each preferred provider and non-preferred provider.

9. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein each preferred provider includes a respective associated preferred criteria, and wherein evaluating the at least one quote from the first preferred provider to determine if the at least one quote satisfies the offer comprises determining if the quote satisfies the preferred criteria associated with the first preferred provider.

10. The computer-implemented method of claim 9, wherein attempting to satisfy the offer from the group of non-preferred providers comprises evaluating offers from the preferred providers that do not meet the preferred criteria.

11. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in Claim 1.

12. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions, comprising:

receiving from a customer machine an offer representing a value that the customer is willing to exchange for a product;

ranking each preferred provider in a plurality of preferred providers according to a preferred criteria;

selecting a highest ranked preferred provider from the plurality of preferred providers; and

attempting to match the offer from the customer with the highest ranked preferred provider by determining whether a quote obtained from the highest ranked preferred provider satisfies the preferred criteria associated with the highest ranked preferred provider.

13. The computer-readable medium of claim 12, further comprising:

if the attempt to match the offer with the highest ranked preferred provider is successful, negotiating a purchase of the product from the highest ranked preferred provider.

14. The computer-readable medium of claim 13, further

comprising:

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15. The computer-readable medium of claim 14, wherein attempting to match the offer with other providers is performed in descending order of the ranking associated with each preferred provider.

16. The computer-readable medium of claim 14, wherein if repeatedly attempting to match the offer with other preferred providers is unsuccessful, attempting to match the offer with one of a plurality of non-preferred providers, and, if successful, negotiating a purchase of the product from the matching non-preferred provider.

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18. The computer-readable medium of claim 16 wherein each quote is obtained from each non-preferred provider indirectly through a global distribution system that stores fare information associated with each non-preferred provider.

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19. The computer-readable medium of claim 12, wherein the product includes a travel service.

20. The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein the travel service comprises airfare.

21. The computer-readable medium of claim 12 wherein each quote is obtained from each preferred provider indirectly through a global distribution system that stores fare information associated with each preferred provider.

22. The computer-readable medium of claim 12 wherein the preferred criteria is negotiated with the preferred providers.

20 23. The computer-readable medium of claim 12 wherein the preferred criteria comprises a round robin decision process based upon industry market share of the preferred providers.

24. A computer system for matching offers with quotes, comprising:

an online travel service exchanger, including:

5 a web server component configured to interface with a customer machine over a network connection and receive from the customer machine an offer for a product, the offer identifying a cost for the product;

A 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90 95 100 105 110 115 120 125 130 135 140 145 150 155 160 165 170 175 180 185 190 195 200 205 210 215 220 225 230 235 240 245 250 255 260 265 270 275 280 285 290 295 300 305 310 315 320 325 330 335 340 345 350 355 360 365 370 375 380 385 390 395 400 405 410 415 420 425 430 435 440 445 450 455 460 465 470 475 480 485 490 495 500 505 510 515 520 525 530 535 540 545 550 555 560 565 570 575 580 585 590 595 600 605 610 615 620 625 630 635 640 645 650 655 660 665 670 675 680 685 690 695 700 705 710 715 720 725 730 735 740 745 750 755 760 765 770 775 780 785 790 795 800 805 810 815 820 825 830 835 840 845 850 855 860 865 870 875 880 885 890 895 900 905 910 915 920 925 930 935 940 945 950 955 960 965 970 975 980 985 990 995 1000

a travel server component configured to obtain at least one quote associated with each provider in a plurality of providers to provide the product at a cost, the plurality of providers comprising at least two groups: a preferred providers group and a non-preferred providers group, each preferred provider having a distinct preference ranking; and

the online travel service exchanger being further configured to attempt to match the offer with each preferred provider in the preferred providers group in descending order of preference.

25. The computer system of claim 24, wherein the online travel service exchanger is further configured to negotiate a purchase
20 of the product from the provider selected as a match for the offer.

26. The computer system of claim 24, wherein the travel server component obtains the at least one quote associated with each
25 preferred provider from a global distribution system configured

to make available fare information associated with each preferred provider.

27. The computer system of claim 24, wherein the online travel service exchanger is further configured to evaluate quotes provided by each preferred provider in descending order of preference ranking by determining whether the quotes provided satisfy a preferred criteria associated with each preferred provider.

28. The computer system of claim 24, wherein the online travel service exchanger is further configured to attempt to match the offer with one of the non-preferred providers by evaluating quotes supplied by the non-preferred providers to identify a lowest quote and selecting the lowest quote as the matching quote.

29. The computer system of claim 28, wherein the travel server component obtains the at least one quote associated with each non-preferred provider from a global distribution system configured to make available fare information associated with each non-preferred provider.